



Representative
MARK SCHOESLER

9th District

2002 Session Outlook

Serving Asotin, Whitman, Adams
and south Spokane counties.



Representative
DON COX

January 2002

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The 2002 Legislature convened Jan. 14, and it will likely be one of the most challenging legislative sessions in decades. In a year that would normally find us fine-tuning the operating budget, we face instead the daunting job of coming to terms with a \$1.25 billion shortfall. The projections are bleak, but the financial crisis makes it clearer than ever that there is no substitute for bringing spending back within our means.

Long before the tragic events of Sept. 11, the state's economy was headed for a slump fueled by downturns in agriculture, high-tech and aerospace. Combined with the seriously flawed budget written by the Senate last year, all the elements were in place for an economic train wreck. We voted against the budget because it was full of poor fiscal planning and false promises, and in a very real sense, the check bounced.

Already some lawmakers have proposed tax increases as a way to balance the budget, but we vehemently oppose that approach to resolving the crisis. Increasing taxes will only compound our problems. We are committed to fighting for a responsible spending plan that protects taxpayers, vital services, public safety and education – without imposing any new tax increases.

Since the 2001 session, there has also been a change in the political makeup of the Legislature. Democrats now control the House 50-48. Democrats also have a one-seat majority in the Senate. Although the margins are slim, they will nonetheless have principal control over the legislative agenda. Even so, the scheduled 60-day session provides unprecedented opportunities for statesmanship and bipartisan solutions to difficult problems.

This newsletter highlights these and other matters we will be working on this session. It also includes a brief questionnaire on some of the issues we believe are of interest to citizens in our district. We hope you will take a few minutes to complete and return the survey. Your thoughts and opinions will help guide our decisions in the months ahead.

Sincerely,

Rep. Mark Schoesler

Rep. Don Cox

Your Ninth District Legislators

Representative **DON COX**

Committees:

- Appropriations
- Education
- Higher Education

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Representative **MARK SCHOESLER**

Committees:

- Agriculture and Ecology
- Capital Budget

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Balancing the budget

Several contributing factors have led us to where we are now. While the terrorist attacks in September and the resulting fallout in the business community have influenced the economy, they are not the sole cause of our economic woes. In fact, the writing was on the wall when the Legislature adopted the 2001-2003 operating budget. We couldn't support the budget because we knew it would put our state on a fast-track to financial instability. We were concerned that Washington citizens eventually would be faced with drastic cuts in important programs and services, huge tax increases or both. Unfortunately, our worst fears have come true.

When Gov. Locke unveiled his supplemental budget proposal in December, it included \$246 million in cuts for public health services, disabled citizens, nursing homes and pharmacists who provide prescription drugs to low-income citizens on Medicaid. It would also raise taxes by \$100 million, despite the governor's assurances that he would not do so.

We must reevaluate how the state provides services, eliminate unnecessary bureaucracy, and ensure we are doing things as efficiently as possible. The reality is the problems we are facing today are, for the most part, a result of poor fiscal decisions made in June, when the budget was adopted. We shouldn't ask hard-working Washington citizens to bail out state government. Like the families we represent, the state must prioritize its needs. We will work to defend funding for the essential programs that our most vulnerable citizens depend on and have a right to expect.

The bottom line is that the Locke budget still spends over \$1 billion more than we'll bring in this biennium, ignoring the real problem — the size and cost of state government. We hear what the hard-working families in the 9th District are telling us — that there is no substitute for living within our means.

Locke budget would hurt higher education

It is critical for the Legislature to maintain its perspective on higher education as an investment in our state's future. We believe the governor's budget proposal to cut \$54 million in higher education, and allow universities to raise tuition to make up the difference, is irresponsible. Middle-income families would be forced

to shoulder the burden of an 18-percent tuition increase. We simply can't support balancing the budget on the backs of students who are trying to improve their lives by going to school, or families trying to put their kids through college. As the ranking Republican on the House Higher Education Committee, Rep. Cox will continue to focus on ensuring access to quality higher education for all students, particularly middle-income families who may not qualify for needs grant scholarships.

We are pleased that the governor removed the freeze on important construction projects that were among higher education facility and equipment upgrades funded in the 2001-03 capital budget. Projects such as Washington State University's Shock Physics Building and Johnson Hall, as well as the Technology Center at Eastern Washington University, will be monitored closely to make certain they remain on track.



Rep. Cox is regarded as one of the Legislature's most knowledgeable and influential leaders on education issues. Here, Don confers with a colleague on the House floor.

2002 Session Outlook



Brightening the business climate

It simply isn't economically wise to do business in a state where profits go out the window because of excessive business and occupation taxes. When we factor in unrelenting, punitive state regulations, it's easy to see why businesses make the decision to relocate to states with a more receptive business climate. We will be working this session to turn back efforts to raise business and occupation taxes, and we will fight proposals to repeal many of the modest tax exemptions enacted by the Legislature in recent years. Any way you slice it, taking away business tax exemptions is still a tax increase. This would be disastrous at a time when many businesses are struggling to keep their doors open. The bottom line will be loss of jobs.

Rural communities struggle with additional challenges when the necessary infrastructure isn't in place to encourage new businesses to locate in our region. We must help communities to develop critical local infrastructure improvements such as water and sewer to provide necessary incentives in attracting new business development.

Now more than ever, with businesses fleeing the state, and rural communities feeling the pinch, we need to make common-sense changes to our state's permit system. We must continue to work toward a fairer and more efficient process. It simply doesn't make economic sense to require people to waste months waiting for approval of permits.

Improving transportation

Agreement could not be reached last year on a comprehensive funding plan, so it's back to the drawing board. When negotiations broke down over the summer, a number of critical projects were left without funding around the state. Among the key sticking points were proposals for a significant hike in the gas tax, an increase in the tax on diesel fuel, and a boost in fees paid by owners of trucks and recreational vehicles.

The governor has proposed a \$13.6 billion plan which is essentially the same proposal that lawmakers rejected last year. In addition to a 9-cent gas tax increase and a 3-cent hike in the tax on diesel fuel, Locke proposes an increased sales tax on car pur-

chases, higher weight fees on trucks and recreational vehicles, and a \$50 license registration fee.

Locke threat alienates communities

Like many legislators, we were disappointed by the governor's threat to retaliate against those in the Legislature who would oppose his 9-cent gas tax proposal. In a Seattle broadcast interview, Locke said that lawmakers who don't vote for his plan, and its 9-cent increase in the gas tax, could see road projects in their districts excluded. He also warned that legislators who don't line up behind the plan should not expect restoration of cuts in human services in their communities.

These tactics don't equate with what we regard as leadership and statesmanship, and do little to bring people together to solve this statewide issue. What he's done is exacerbate the problem of rebuilding the public's confidence in government and elected officials.

We believe we can get the job done this session, but not by breaking promises and making threats to cut projects for anyone who doesn't think the governor's way is the only way.

2002 legislative calendar

Monday, Jan. 14 — First day of session

Friday, Feb. 8 — Deadline for bills to be passed out of House committees

Tuesday, Feb. 12 — Deadline for bills to clear House fiscal committees

Tuesday, Feb. 19 — Deadline for House passage of bills originating in the House

March 1 — Deadline for passage of Senate bills by House committees

March 4 — Deadline to pass Senate bills out of House fiscal committees

March 8 — Deadline to pass all bills out of both House and Senate chambers (5 p.m.)

March 14 — Session adjourns (sine die)

Schoesler named top Republican on Agriculture Committee

Rep. Schoesler has been named Ranking Republican on the House Agriculture and Ecology Committee, a position that provides the 9th District and the state's second-largest industry an adept and experienced voice on one of the Legislature's most influential committees.

His new responsibilities as the Agriculture and Ecology Committee's top Republican necessitated a difficult decision for Mark – a choice between a critical committee assignment and his role as House Republican whip, a key position on the caucus leadership team.

"It's been an honor to serve as a member of leadership and to have a role in developing caucus strategy and policy decisions, but I believe my legislative skills and real-life experience as a farmer and rancher will be better used in a leadership position on Agriculture and Ecology," said Schoesler. "As a legislator and a farmer, there is no issue more important to me than revitalizing Washington's agriculture economy. A healthy and viable agriculture industry is vital to the economy statewide, and this committee is where agriculture and ecology interests come together."

Schoesler said a major focus will be reducing the mass of state regulations that burden Washington's farmers and growers. Combined with rising energy costs, lower commodity prices and global competition, the farming community struggles with an almost incomprehensible mountain of bureaucratic and regulatory obstacles, ranging from labor and environmental regulations to shoreline management rules and ergonomics.

The Agriculture and Ecology Committee considers a wide range of legislation including irrigation and other water-related issues, agricultural production, marketing and sales, and plant and animal disease control. The committee also deals with weights and measures, flood control and environmental laws.



Rep. Schoesler takes on new responsibilities this year as Ranking Republican on the House Agriculture and Ecology Committee. Mark's appointment reflects his legislative experience and first-hand knowledge of ag-industry issues.

Election-year mail restrictions

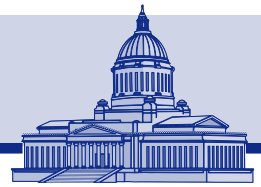
As your state representatives, we make every effort to keep you informed on what is

happening in Olympia. However, this is an election year, and under the provisions of Initiative 134, we may only send two mailings during 2002 – this newsletter is the first of the two.

During the 12-month period preceding the expiration of a legislator's term of office, no incumbent may mail at public expense a letter, newsletter, brochure, or other piece of literature that is not in direct response to a constituent's request for a response or for information. However, one mailing within 30 days after the start of a regular legislative session and one within 60 days after the end of a regular session of identical newsletters to constituents are permitted.

The initiative does allow us to respond to your direct request for information, but other mailings, such as the **Budget Update** that was mailed in November, are not allowed. We encourage you to write or call us whenever you have a question, concern or an idea to share on legislation or other issues.

9th District Constituent Survey



Transportation

1. Please rank the following transportation solutions in order of importance to you.

Voter 1 Voter 2

- | | | |
|-------|-------|---|
| _____ | _____ | More roads and lanes of traffic |
| _____ | _____ | Reducing traffic on existing roads |
| _____ | _____ | Better road maintenance |
| _____ | _____ | Removing delays for commercial vehicles |
| _____ | _____ | Pedestrian and bike paths |
| _____ | _____ | Sound barriers |
| _____ | _____ | Better alternatives (such as rapid transit and local bus service) |

2. Gov. Locke has proposed a \$13.6 billion transportation-funding plan which is similar to the proposal rejected by the Legislature last summer. It includes a 9-cent gas tax increase, a 3-cent hike in the tax on diesel fuel, increased sales tax on vehicle sales, and higher weight fees for trucks and RVs. If placed on the ballot, how would you be inclined to vote on this package?

Voter 1 Voter 2

- | | | |
|-------|-------|-----------|
| _____ | _____ | Yes |
| _____ | _____ | No |
| _____ | _____ | Undecided |

3. What is your opinion about putting the package to a public vote?

Voter 1 Voter 2

- | | | |
|-------|-------|---|
| _____ | _____ | The public should be allowed to vote on it, absolutely |
| _____ | _____ | No, we elect lawmakers to represent us and they should make these decisions |
| _____ | _____ | I'm undecided as to whether the public should vote on it |

4. How much of a gas tax increase **would** you support?

Voter 1 Voter 2

- | | | |
|-------|-------|----------------------|
| _____ | _____ | 1-3 cents a gallon |
| _____ | _____ | 4-6 cents a gallon |
| _____ | _____ | 7-9 cents a gallon |
| _____ | _____ | 10-15 cents a gallon |
| _____ | _____ | No increase |

Supermajority

5. Currently, school bonds and levies must receive approval from at least 60 percent of the voters to win passage. Some school districts have seen levies defeated, even though the issues received well over 50 percent of the vote. Do you favor lowering the levy requirement to 50 percent?

Voter 1 Voter 2

- | | | |
|-------|-------|-----|
| _____ | _____ | Yes |
| _____ | _____ | No |

Legislative priorities

6. What do you believe are the most critical issues facing the state of Washington? Rank from a high of 1 to a low of 8 in order of importance.

Voter 1 Voter 2

- | | | |
|-------|-------|--------------------------------|
| _____ | _____ | Reducing crime |
| _____ | _____ | Improving education |
| _____ | _____ | Controlling taxes and spending |
| _____ | _____ | State transportation system |
| _____ | _____ | Improving social services |
| _____ | _____ | National security |
| _____ | _____ | Washington's business climate |
| _____ | _____ | Property taxes |

Legislative Hotline: 1-800-562-6000

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